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AMALIA KUESSNER'S WORK

SHE WILL SELECT HER SUBJECTS HEREAFTER.

Plans of the Indiana Girl Who Has Won Fame as a Miniature Painter.

[Special to The Indianapolis News.]

CHICAGO, October 19.—Amalia Kuessner Coudert, the most famous miniature painter in the world, has recently been commissioned to make a likeness of Emperor William of Germany. Miss Kuessner (as she is called professionally, though now it is Mrs. Coudert) left for New York Tuesday afternoon. She expects to spend most of the winter in this country, leaving for London and Berlin in the spring.

Already Miss Kuessner has painted the Prince of Wales, the Czar of Russia and Cecil Rhodes. When she shall have finished the portrait of the German Emperor she believes she will have in her gallery of royalty the four greatest men of the age.

"I should like to paint the Sultan of Turkey," said Miss Kuessner, in chatting with The News representative. "I think he would be an attractive subject, and deserves a place with the others."

It is not true, as has been reported, that Miss Kuessner has decided, since her marriage, to give up her work.

Will Choose Her Subjects.

"I shall not do work as I have up to this time," said the artist, speaking of her plans. "In the past I have taken quite a number of people where there was nothing inspiring in the subject nor anything to add to my reputation. They had money, and were willing to pay fabulous prices, and I needed the money.

But from now on I shall paint only what will add to my reputation, or subjects which inspire me. There may be one or two more among royalty, and then I will take only beautiful women or great men—men who stand before the world as heroes—men who have done things and are strong and famous. Cecil Rhodes was such. He was an inspiration His head was magnificent. Another thing, I shall paint hereafter for myself. As it is I have practically none of my own work. I am commissioned to do a portrait, and it becomes the property of the subject. I have not even examples to show to people who might come to me. In fact, the people who have come to me have done so on the faith of my reputation entirely. They have seen none of my work.

Different from Other Painters.

"In that respect I am different from many painters of miniatures. I am the only one who has painted royalty on orders. Others have painted royalty for their own amusement or use, and often from photographs; but I never have painted except upon a command and in return for pay. In carrying out this new plan of work, I will do less in point of quantity, but it will probably appear to the world that I do more; the ones who are done are more likely to be heard of."

Asked if she would not like to do a miniature of President McKinley, she replied diplomatically, "I hope he will be President."

Miss Kuessner has been staying at the Auditorium, and it was reported that she was seriously ill. This was a mistake, and grew out of a slight illness by which she was confined indoors for a short time. The visit to Chicago was to see the artist's parents, who live here with a brother and a sister. It is part of a honeymoon trip which began in Europe on the 3d of last July. No work has been done since that time.

Miss Kuessner is a native of Terre Haute, Ind., but has spent much of her time in New York and Chicago.

Was Not at Kimberley.

At the outbreak of the Boer war there was a report that Miss Kuessner was in Kimberley with Cecil Rhodes, and there were some apocryphal stories afloat as to her adventures and marvelous escape from the city of diamond mines.

"That was entirely a mistake," said Miss Kuessner, smiling. "It came about through a mistake in the date line of a cablegram. I was in Cape Town and had finished painting Cecil Rhodes's portrait and he had gone to Kimberley. The correspondent wired from Cape Town, saying I had just finished a miniature of Rhodes, but the date line got changed to Kimberley in transmission, and there you have all the rest."

Miss Kuessner has no regular studio.

"I do not think people look well in studio lights," said she. "I think it is much better to work in a drawing-room if one can and of course I can, for all I need is a little table, a window and my little outfit. I work in my hotel wherever I may happen to be, but I prefer London and do most of my work there.

The suite in the Auditorium, occupied by Miss Kuessner, had nothing distinguishingly professional about it. There were sheafs of long stemmed American beauty roses and silver dishes, filled with their petals. The rooms were redolent of their perfume. Otherwise it was simply one of the suites overlooking the avenue and the lake.

Miss Kuessner's Personality.

Miss Kuessner was dressed in a house gown of old gold, trimmed with real lace. She is very dark, with large black eyes and hair loose and rather wild. She is small and slender and will scarcely weigh over a hundred pounds. Her gestures and manner of speaking would lead one to believe her to be French by birth and training, and there is a decidedly foreign accent to her conversation.

Miss Kuessner's work is the result of inborn genius. She never took a lesson in miniature painting in her life and the first portrait she did made quite as much stir as any that she has since made. It was the likeness of a Mrs. Hazard, of New York.

The artist talks pleasantly of her experience with royalty. She says kings and princes are quite generally misunderstood, and she found the Prince of Wales and the Czar of Russia to be most genial and interesting persons.

"I wish," she said in conclusion, "you would say to The Indianapolis News that the article printed in that paper at the time of my marriage was the most pleasant that I saw. They have always been very kind to me and I want them to know that I appreciate it."

Community Affairs File

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AMALIA KUESSNER.

THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

AMALIA KÜSSNER

A PAINTER OF MINIATURES

By Nancy Huston Banks

THE history of art enrolls many records that touch the heart and stir the imagination, but it furnishes no more pathetic picture than Amalia Küssner's unheralded arrival in New York, nor any more romantic story than that of her subsequent career. While struggling blindly toward the light the girl artist called upon a well known social leader, who was also a recognized connoisseur, taking with her specimens of her work, hoping to enlist his interest. The attempt was in vain; he shook his head, saying art like hers was unsuited to the time. It was, he said, too fine, too slow, and above all too costly to meet the requirements of modern taste. Then, taking up a picture of his daughter, which had been photographed on porcelain and colored, he held it out to the "painter-in-little," saying, "That is the sort of thing people want now." She went away bitterly disappointed, chilled and exceeding heavy-hearted. But eighteen months afterward that same gentleman stood in the throng that crowded about her miniatures during the exhibit of women's portraits at the National Academy of Design, in November, 1894.

The miniature is as inseparable from wealth and luxury as the jewels are that its radiance resembles. It is also associated with gold and precious stones, since no other setting befits it. And still costlier than diamonds and rubies—because rarer and more beautiful—is the art which can create the warm, bewitching, vivid miniature. Who has not felt its tenderness, its irresistible charm?

HON. CHARLES KERN

No wonder then that the art of portrait painting should always have commanded royal remuneration and the admiration of

kings. Vasari in his life of Guilio Garata, one of the earliest famous miniature painters, says: "His productions are all in the hands of princes or other great personages." This was in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and all down the long line of miniature painters it has been the same, until the exquisite craft fell into decadence, very soon after the Court of Napoleon went mad over Isabey's miniatures. Holbein was invited to England as the guest of the Lord High Chancellor, and appointed painter to King Henry VIII. Walpole mentions Holbein's miniature of Catherine of Aragon, "a round, on a blue ground." Philip of Spain sent Sir Antonio More to England to paint Queen Mary's on a gold plate, which was unusual, copper being the common basis of miniature painting, after vellum went out of fashion and before ivory began to be used for the purpose, which seems to have been not earlier than well on in the eighteenth century. At the same time that Sir Antonio More painted this miniature on gold, a woman—one Levina Teelinek—also painted a picture of Queen Mary on a card, and Her Majesty seems to have preferred it to the other, although the artist had for it only "one casting bottell guilt." Broit received five hundred pounds for a miniature of Queen Anne. James I delighted to honor Nicholas Hillard, and no one could paint His Majesty's portrait or that of any member of the Royal household without the artist's consent. Charles I showered gifts and attentions upon Peter Oliver, and when Charles II came to the throne he went in person to see the widow of the famous "painter-in-little," and not only bought all the work of Oliver that remained in his widow's possession, but settled a handsome income on her.

MRS. CHARLES KERN

But there were no generous kings in New York to take Amalia Küssner by the hand and lead her through a golden door into the realm of riches and refinement wherein she might hope to find patronage and appreciation of her art. There were only society queens, so hedged about by apparently impregnable walls that she almost despaired of ever reaching them—of being able to show them what she could do. Yet with unflagging courage she

MRS. M. A. TYLER

worked on: watching, waiting, longing, painting—always painting—day and night.

Those who know only the finished miniature, and have no acquaintance with the method of its production, cannot conceive of the labor that it represents. Each of these tiny masterpieces—these ornaments with human identification—these concentrated expressions of pictorial art—stands for more toil, of a peculiarly exacting sort, than the largest canvas. The brushes, some of them containing scarcely half a dozen hairs, make strokes so fine that most of the painting must be done under a magnifying glass. And the touches on the frail bit of ivory must be as unerring as they are light, for the smallest mistake may destroy the characteristic translucence that constitutes the miniature's greatest charm.

After toiling thus for several months the eagerly-wished-for opportunity came at last, in the usual unexpected way, through a letter of introduction to a New York woman of great wealth, high social position and much personal influence; and from the moment of its presentation fame and fortune were within Amalia Küssner's grasp. Since then her brush has been monopolized by the highest fashion, not only of New York but of the whole country, and no feature of her work is more remarkable than the amount of it. It is difficult to define Miss Küssner's school or to describe her style. She has studied no master as a model, and has apparently given little attention to technique. She paints, if possible, entirely from life, and draws with great ease and rapidity. The richness of her coloring and delicacy of treatment have all the refinement of the French school.

MRS. WILLIAM L. SCOTT

MRS. CHARLES HARNOT STRONG

MISS FLORA SCOTT STRONG

DO YOU REMEMBER? — Amalia Kussner, a Terre Haute woman, became internationally famous as a miniature painter at the turn of the century. Her beauty is evident in the portrait top left. One of her miniatures of Mrs. Lorillard Spencer, maternal aunt of Winston Churchill, top right, and the diamond and emerald neck lace presented her by the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII of England, below it, are now in the possession of her cousin, Carl Weinhardt of Indianapolis. The diamond pin, lower left, a replica of the Prince's prize-winning race horse, Persimmon, also was presented to the miniaturist by Edward. It is now at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College as Amalia attended the academy there as a little girl. Lower right is one of the tiles from her family's fireplace, on which Amalia painted as a child.

REMINISCENCES OF AMELIA KUESSNER.

One of the pleasant memories of my childhood is that of a Christmas Day spent at the home of the now famous miniature painter Amelia Kuessner, in Terre Haute, Indiana.

I, with my sister, was invited to attend the lighting of the Christmas tree and to spend the day with the family. We went early in order to enjoy the Christmas tree festivities. Each one received a gift which greatly pleased us, mine being a complete set of pewter dishes, characteristic of the German preeminenece in toy-making which was put up in the quaintest of boxes, ornamented with swans on the cover.

The Christmas dinner, served in German fashion, was a revelation to me, from the time when passing by the kitchen in my play, I had seen the cook rubbing lemon over the roasting turkey. Each one was expected to cut his own slice of bread, and rather than ask some one to cut a piece for me, I went without.

After spending the afternoon in games and songs, we returned home happy and delighted to tell of our first Christmas spent in German fashion, and, in particular, pleased with my new-found friend, dark-eyed little "Mollie."

This was the first of a number of visits which I enjoyed in her home while in Terre Haute, and each time the visit was made memorable by the traditional German hospitality.

Afterwards, at long intervals, we learned of the welfare and progress of her family. Her sister Louise developed more than ordinary ability as a vocalist, and, studying with the celebrated master, Errani, and with her brother, Albert, emulated her father as a composer. Amelia was not behind them in intellectual development. When she was graduated from the high school of her city, with honor, her essay was rendered in German from a celebrated couplet of Goethe.

Later she gave evidence of great artistic talent and ever since has given especial attention to obtaining a high standard of excellence, varying her art studies with individual and persevering research into the decadent art of miniature painting.

Her history from this time is very familiar to the American reading public; how discouraged and unrecognized she sought the patronage and personal influence of a well known leader of the four hundred of New York, and having secured her favor and unqualified endorsement, she entered upon an artistic and social career unparalleled for its brilliancy, unless by Angelica Kauffmann.

Her success is especially unusual from the fact that she follows no school, no master. Her methods are all her own —perfect methods—but original.

The rich coloring and delicacy of treatment suggests the French school, but only suggests it.

Some years ago her family removed from Terre Haute to Chicago and from that time I heard nothing of them until the fame of Amelia added another star, and that a brilliant one, to the galaxy of gifted Indiana women.

Ida Virginia Smith.

Sept. 26, '96.

Local Woman Was World-Famous As Miniature Painter in Her Day

Terre Haute Star 8-31-1961

BY FRANCES E. HUGHES

Now treasured as collector's items are the many miniatures made by Amalia Kussner, Terre Haute woman, at the turn of the century.

For Miss Kussner was world-famous for her art and she painted most of the women in the "400" of society in New York, wealthy women of Chicago, royalty and members of court circles in Europe and Cecil Rhodes, the "Diamond King" of Africa.

Miss Kussner was a first cousin of the late Allen Weinhardt, and pieces of her art are treasured by his sons, Allen J. Weinhardt, Jr., of 114 South Twenty-fourth Street, Carl J. Weinhardt of Indianapolis and Robert Weinhardt of Elysian Way, East Liverpool, Ohio.

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LORENZ KUSSNER, who had come from Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, and his wife, Emmaline Weinhardt, who had migrated with her family from Weisbaden, Germany, were married in Crawfordsville. There their two daughters, Louise and Amalia, were born.

After they moved to Terre Haute, a son, Albert, was born. Mr. Kussner established a store, "Palace of Music," in the present Memorial Hall building, where he made and sold musical instruments. The family lived in an apartment on the second floor.

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ENROLLING at St. Mary-of-the-Woods Academy at the age of 6 years, Amalia was the youngest student ever to attend the school. It was there that her interest in art was stimulated by Sister Maurice and she received the fine training that led to her success.

Eighty years ago she was graduated from Wiley High School, and both before and after her graduation she studied at the academy and under private tutors. One year was spent in New York at Mme. deSilva's and Mrs. Bradford's fashionable boarding school.

Many local friends of the family have pieces of china on which Amalia painted when a little girl. She painted on everything she could find, including the tiles of the fireplaces in the homes of her parents and of her uncles and aunts, Dr. and Mrs. Allen Pence and Mr. and Mrs. John Weinhardt, and on ivory keys from old pianos in her father's store.

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SHE BECAME interested in "painting-in-little" from a miniature given her as a child. She painted miniatures of her family and friends and was commissioned to paint some of Donald and Hamill Baker, sons of Attorney and Mrs. Harry Baker, and of Marian and Fred Reynolds, children of Attorney and Mrs. Reynolds, and others.

When Albert went East to enter Philips Exeter Academy, Amalia went along to New York. There she looked up a friend, Alice Fischer, who had made a success on Broadway and organized the Twelfth Night Club for actresses.

Alice gave her an introduction which led her to get a job as staff artist at Tiffany's. Then, when Amalia opened her own studio, Alice helped her get commissions to paint Lillian Russell, America's prima donna, and Marie Tempest, English opera star.

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ALICE ALSO GAVE her an introduction to Mrs. Theodore A. Havemeyer, a leader of New York's original "400," which led to a commission from the society woman. This started the "painter-in-little" in her phenomenal rise to success. She then opened a fine studio in the Windsor Hotel, raised her prices from $60 to $400, and received commissions from most of New York's society women.

Twice she had her miniatures exhibited at the women's portrait exhibition at the National Academy of Design. Her fame spread to Chicago, where her family moved, and there she painted 16 miniatures of the Armour family alone as well as those of many other prominent families.

A friendship made with Mrs. Arthur Paget, wife of a South African millionaire and a member of the court circles of London, caused her to go to London in 1896. There she painted Mme. Melba, the prima donna; Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, and most of the famous women in the court circle.

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THIS LED to exhibit of her work in the National Gallery in London and, eventually, to a commission to paint the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. Besides paying her a large sum, the Prince gave her a diamond and emerald necklace (later she gave the gems to England for war relief work and had them replaced with synthetic stones) and a diamond brooch, a replica of his prize-winning race horse, Persimmon.

She raised her price to $1,000 and eventually got as high as $4,000 for one miniature. Not only was she then accepted socially in London's court circles, but New York's "400" began to recognize her.

Through Mrs. Paget, Amalia went to St. Petersburg, Russia, in March of 1899. There she painted Grand Duchess Marie Vladimir and was summoned to the Winter Palace to make miniatures of both the Czar and Czarina of Russia. Besides payment for these, she received gifts of a bracelet, necklace and ring of diamonds and rubies.

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WITH NO INTRODUCTION, Amalia next went to Capetown, South Africa, where she got a commission to paint Cecil Rhodes, the "Diamond King." Caught in the Boer War there, she came out by ox team and horseback and returned to this country.

Her marriage to Captain Charles dupont Coudert, scion of a wealthy French-American family, took place July 4, 1900, in the sacristry of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. She then had all the fame, wealth and social position she desired, and the fad of having one's portrait painted in miniature on ivory was waning.

So, she did then only what she felt would add to her reputation or people who inspired her. She and her husband traveled on the Riviera, in England and Egypt, and spent a year in an old castle in Germany. Finally, they settled at Windlesham Hall in Surrey, England, spending Summers at Dachstein in the Austrian Tyrol. She died of a lung ailment in May of 1932 in Switzerland. Her husband is now living there.

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AMALIA'S PARENTS both died at her home. Her sister, Louise, who gained recognition for her beautiful voice, was married there to John Wells Cloud, an American. Louise is now 95 years old and is living at Magnolia House in Sunningdale, Berks. Both couples became English subjects.

Albert, her brother, married Mary Pettit of Wabash and gained fame as a pianist and composer. He died two years before Amalia at his home in St Petersburg, Fla., and is buried in Highland Lawn Cemetery here.